

have a system that would guarantee the security of that kind of retirement savings. And we've done a number of things in the last 2 years; there is some more legislation before Congress now. And some of you in these hearings may have even greater ideas about what we can do to make it easier for people to save for their own retirement.

But I always tell people that we actually have two things we have to do. We have to secure the safety, the soundness, and the salvation of Social Security into the 21st century and look at all the options that have been raised here by you. But we also have to educate the American people that they must save more for their own retirement, and then we have to make it easier for them to do so and to succeed in doing so.

The last point I'd like to make is this: Because of the reductions in the deficit, the reduction in interest rates, we may have already added a few years to the life of the Social Security Trust Fund. We can put a lot of years on the life of the Fund; we can stabilize the Fund. And now that we've eliminated these chronic, huge deficits of the last decade and a half, we can set this thing right. And if we can act now, meaning early next year, with the support of the American people across party lines and regional lines and income lines, we can make modest changes today that will have a huge impact in the next century.

So the last thing I'd like to say to all of you is, one of you said that you wanted us to do what we needed to do in a hurry and in a nonpartisan, fair way. That's the message I think that all of us need to hear, all the Members of Congress, all the members of our administration. We do not need to put this off. Many people are afraid that anything you do to Social Security is political dynamite. I think it's worse dynamite to walk away from a problem when we can solve it with discipline, modest, far-sighted actions now that will have a huge impact 20 and 30 years from now.

So I thank you. I was profoundly impressed by what you had to say, and I wish I had more time to go through all your questions. I know now, in 2 hours, Ken Apfel, our Social Security Administrator, will be on this program, and he'll be able maybe to pick

up some of the more specific questions you asked me and others that you doubtless will have for him.

And again let me thank The Pew Charitable Trusts. This is a wonderful public service.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Rebecca Rimel, president, The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Jerry John Rawlings of Ghana in Accra, Ghana

March 23, 1998

President Rawlings. Let me just take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you to Ghana, and quite frankly, if I had the choice, I would have suggested that you visit a place like Ghana in the month of August when it's nice and cool. So while you're here under this hot, blazing African sun, do everything you can to—what do you call—put in as much fluid as you can in order to fight the dehydrate effect of the tropics. But at the same time, if you keep away from the shades, the wives and the husbands would be missing the chance of a nice suntan before you leave the tropics.

Let me say that as short as this visit is, I think what's most important is the content. And there's no doubt that the agenda that's been drawn out would be an issue that takes on the serious subjects that concern Africa, an issue that's been initiated by the President and members of his Cabinet. That's most welcome to this continent.

Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, 27 years from now, as I said to some of our colleagues in the CNN yesterday, that the population of this continent or sub-Saharan Africa will be doubling to about 1.5 billion. And if we don't take the appropriate measures both from the economic standpoint and the political standpoint to lay the foundation towards development and peace, I'm afraid we'll be running down the hill.

However, I feel very hopeful and very confident that the measures we've taken—and a good number of African countries—we're

beginning to register a healthy economic upturn. The political stability that's returning to this continent, no doubt, I believe is what must have encouraged the President and his colleagues to take on this issue to do what they can to assist the efforts that we're putting in Africa.

And for this, I would like to welcome him, his wife, his—our dear Chelsea—we'll talk about her later—and members of his Cabinet. And I'm so glad that we have Reverend Minister Jackson also as a member of the delegation.

And—what else? Talking about the 8-hour period, let me explain that in politics there are times I believe that we spend the least time with those who have the least problems. It's hot naturally so all the time. I mean, there are times when we can relax and spend a lot of time with those that we have so much in common. But quite frankly, the relationship between the U.S. and Ghana has been so healthy, so much foundation has been laid, that, quite frankly, I believe there's no turning back in terms of the progress that's been made. And I can only see a forward movement.

And let me simply end up by saying that please, you've come at the wrong time of the season, not in economic or political terms but the hot, blazing sun. So please do what you can to—not to dehydrate yourself. Do what you can to take in as much liquids as you can, and don't miss out on the sun.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President Clinton, have you spoken with—

President Rawlings. Can we make this just the one and only question, because—let's put it this way, I don't want to share the limited time that I have with the President. I have only, barely—no, about 8 hours from now. And our colleagues are waiting in the Cabinet for a meeting. Beyond that, our people have been waiting from 5 a.m., and there are hundreds of thousands, chiefs, elders, children, et cetera. I don't want anybody fainting. Neither do I think President Clinton would like to see that happen.

Q. It's only one, sir.

President Clinton. I'll take one question.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Thank you, sir. Have you spoken with President Yeltsin? Are you concerned about his dismissal of his Cabinet? Do you think you understand what is behind it or what the effect will be, sir?

President Clinton. Let me say, first of all, I have not spoken with him. I found out about it this morning when I woke up. And until I know more, I don't think I should say much, except that we don't interfere in the internal affairs of any country, and as President, he has to constitute the government as he sees fit. We hope that the general direction of policy will be unaffected by this, and I have no reason to believe that it—that anything different will occur in a way that's at all adverse to the partnership we've been building with Russia. If I know anything else in the next few hours, I'll be glad to tell you.

Let me also thank President Rawlings for welcoming me here. I have very much looked forward to coming to Ghana, especially since the first time we met in the White House. I admire the direction this nation is taking under his leadership, and I want to make the most of this next 8 hours. So we better go to work so we can get out there and see the people, too.

President Rawlings. Thank you very much, sir.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:25 a.m. in the garden at Osu Castle. President Rawlings referred to civil rights leader Jesse Jackson. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the People of Ghana in Accra

March 23, 1998

Thank you. President and Mrs. Rawlings, honorable ministers, honorable members of the Council of State, honorable Members of Parliament, honorable members of the Judiciary, *nananom* [to the chiefs], and the people of Ghana. *Mitsea mu. America fuo kyia mo* [My greetings to you. Greetings from America]. Now you have shown me what *akwaaba* [welcome] really means. Thank you, thank you so much.